

Impact of Public Libraries on the Health Millennium Development Goals

Shruti

Department of Statistics, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam
Corresponding Author: shrutiau@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study examines how public libraries in Senegal contribute to the country's health-related MDGs. It also analyses the community's information requirements related to health and the information services that libraries provide. Due to government incompetence, public libraries have faced a difficult problem in fulfilling their role in achieving the health-MDGs. The survey design, which employed questionnaires to collect data, is the methodology used in this study.

Senegalese public library employees and patrons were the target demographic. The findings demonstrated that public libraries have been instrumental in helping to achieve the health-MDGs and that library patrons have a high need for all types of health information, particularly in the areas of maternity and child care. Nevertheless, the vast majority of public libraries lack Internet access. According to the findings, it is essential that all other pertinent agencies focus on the health-MDGs, particularly when it comes to supporting public libraries. In addition to providing information services for library patrons, the project will raise users' understanding of the roles public libraries play in promoting national and international policies.

Keywords: Public libraries, HIV/AIDS, development goals, health information resources, and the health millennium

I. Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were announced in 2000 as part of an effort to lower the rates of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and newborn and maternal mortality globally. Among other things, nations, particularly developing nations, were required to reduce the rates of poverty and child mortality by half by 2015. Under-five mortality rates are some of the highest in the world in Western and Central Africa [1-2]. Governments are battling to successfully implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a tool to improve the lives of their citizens in all facets of human effort.

The achievement of the MDGs depends heavily on libraries, which serve as a major source of information and other services. Achieving Health for All and fulfilling the health Millennium Development Goals require that everyone have access to information on health-related topics. One of the biggest obstacles to knowledge-based healthcare in underdeveloped nations is still a lack of information access. A wide range of experts, including librarians, health care practitioners, policy makers, researchers, publishers, indexers, and system reviewers, must collaborate to create trustworthy, pertinent, and useable information.

Public libraries must be at the forefront of promoting the Millennium Development Goals' "Health Information for All" or "Universal access to vital health-care information by 2015. Despite international groups' efforts to fulfil the deadline in 2015, most African countries, including Senegal, are lagging behind in achieving the health MDGs. Senegal's slow development has been a hindrance to reaching any goals intended to improve the lives of its citizens, and as a result, the country is still in the implementation stage of achieving the MDGs.

The nation has long been beset by health-related problems, such as maternal and infant mortality. Recently, the government and interested parties have been debating the creation of health centers, health policy development, and the building of health information management centers for certain hospitals around the nation. Public libraries, which are supposed to support the spread of health information, have been disregarded in this respect. As a result, public libraries' contribution to achieving the MDGs in health issues in Senegal becomes a difficult undertaking.

II. Review of Connected Networks

Globally, people have come to recognize education as a vital tool for human growth, and several initiatives (such schools and seminars) have been established to ensure that everyone can benefit from education. The public library is another tool that has received little to no attention. According to [3–4], a public library is an important information source for the general public and, to a lesser extent, for politicians and businesspeople. According to the Librarian Glossary [5], a public library is one that has been set up for the general people's use by the local, state, or federal government. Nonetheless, there are some people or institutions that set up libraries for the public's use.

Therefore, a public library is one that provides services to the general public at no cost and that gives members of a community access to political, social, and educational information [4]. Since libraries are essential in developing nations where information is scarce and knowledge production is even lower, librarians must possess the knowledge principles necessary to break down the semantics of many concepts in order to provide information in areas where data, information, and knowledge are so lacking. In order to examine the role that the library would play in embracing or supporting access to data, information, and knowledge, librarians must embrace a simple definition of knowledge. The creation of awareness is crucial; awareness that one plus one equals two, that abstinence or protected sex slows the spread of HIV/AIDS, that proper nutrition helps eliminate infant mortality, and so forth. Because they give the public access to information and education, libraries have traditionally been regarded as knowledge institutions. All societal groups, regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity, can take use of these chances.

III. Millennium Goals of United Nations

About ten years ago, at the Millennium Summit, which took place from September 6–8, 2001, a total of 189 nations adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration, reaffirming their commitment to peace and security, democracy, good governance, and respect for fundamental freedoms and internationally recognized human rights, including the right to development.

Eight quantifiable, time-bound goals were defined and adopted at the summit with the intention of eliminating severe poverty and enhancing living conditions for both men and women. The progress made by several wealthy nations in accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals is discussed by someone [7]. However, because of their severe poverty, high rates of disease-related deaths, high infant mortality rates, lack of a quality educational system, and ongoing HIV/AIDS ravages, many developing nations have not even gotten off the ground. Despite the enormous obstacles, there are more and more chances to increase access to knowledge and information.

As mentioned, libraries could play a significant role in supporting the behavioral changes required to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases in collaboration with medical professionals and health programs. asserts that "drama, song and dances, seminars, peer discussion, and to provide information in regional languages are some of the proactive ways that public libraries should provide information about HIV/AIDS [9]. To put it another way, in order to serve the various types of library patrons, information should be gathered, particularly in the fields of health and other related topics. As each nation looks for solutions to meet these goals, it will be extremely difficult to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals (particularly the health target) without the proactive involvement of libraries.

As important players in this transformation, libraries—especially public libraries—need to be at the forefront of the conversation, contributing ideas and expertise and demonstrating what is feasible. As a member of the health team, the partnership will entail assisting clients, patients, and clinicians in obtaining health-related information. Public libraries might establish a collaboration with a nearby clinic or medical Centre. It is anticipated that librarians will receive training on topics such as poverty, food security, and library health resources. They should also be prepared to work with others to refer patients who are in need of health care or patient education. The library's extensive range of information sources exposes patrons to a diverse range of information, each with its own values. Additionally, they provide people with the chance to study and learn more throughout their life. Public libraries offer a far greater choice of information services, including those from local and federal governments, health authorities, and other organizations, in addition to lifelong learning. Because libraries are "not only an information system but also a communication system," their reliance on library-based information services increases with the complexity of a society's educational and bureaucratic needs [2]. Given this, public libraries play a vital role in assisting decision makers in creating sensible policies that can guarantee the sustainability of health-related issues by providing knowledge on the condition of health and its relationships.

They give people access to information and projects that are relevant to their needs. Therefore, by establishing social justice goals and targets that are intended to support economic progress, the MDGs function as the new framework for sustainable development. Therefore, it is anticipated that public libraries would actively contribute to reaching these goals. Numerous public libraries are in bad condition and lack proper funding, according to published research. Inadequate facilities, pertinent information sources, and staffing are also included. The majority of libraries

and librarians have not yet adopted the new trend for efficient services since the introduction of information technologies.

IV. Health Information Provisions by Library

Although providing health information is difficult for libraries, the goal of addressing the public's need for health information in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals has encouraged the library to provide users with efficient information services. People and patients, communities, service providers, program managers, policymakers, fund providers, and international agencies and organizations are just a few of the various customers and uses of information on the demand side. Everyone needs data on a variety of health-measurement topics, such as rates of death and morbidity, disease outbreaks, socioeconomic status, nutrition, and environmental factors, as well as access, coverage, and quality of services, prices and expenses, and equality.

On the supply side, libraries face difficulties obtaining various types of information materials that address health-related concerns. Unfortunately, due to public libraries' financial difficulties, supply and demand for health information items are currently out of balance. Libraries typically do not have information on adult mortality and cause of death. The coverage and costs of many interventions are not accurately measured, morbidity is also poorly measured, and there is little data to track equity. Furthermore, there is frequently a great deal of overlap and redundancy in the quality of health information, as well as a lack of standardization across definitions and procedures.

V. Research Method

The context selected for this study is public libraries in Senegal. The survey design used to collect data from library employees and patrons is the methodology employed. The researcher selected public libraries because of their intended functions in society, particularly in providing information services to all groups of people in the community. Staff and patrons of public libraries in the Senegalese regions of Dakar, Saint-Louis, Thies, Kaolack, Tambacounda, and Ziguinchor are the target population. Simple random sampling and the multi-stage sampling procedure were used in the study.

Two public libraries from each of the six regions were chosen using the multistage sample approach, and respondents were chosen at random from the public libraries that were chosen. Following that, 200 surveys were given to library employees and patrons. Six public libraries in the area were selected at random to participate in the study. Nonetheless, two groups of responders were chosen at random from among the six public libraries. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, and tables displaying response frequency and associated percentages were used.

VI. Results and Discussions

Regarding the research questions and the study's goal, the data analysis clearly demonstrated that public libraries have been crucial in achieving the Millennium Development Goals for health. A variety of services, including some unrelated to information, are provided by public libraries. Since they are at the center of the community, they therefore fit the function of helping the government achieve any given goal.

This data supports the assertion that libraries help reduce HIV/AIDS and malaria by providing resources like newspapers that offer or announce immunization and campaign chances, educational institutions, and health organizations that provide medical services. As a result, libraries are contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the area of health. Additionally, library patrons have a high demand for health information in all areas, particularly maternity and child care. In most communities, this kind of information is seen as the most noticeable aspect of the health system.

VII. Conclusion and Future scope

The following conclusions were drawn from the study, which examined the contribution of public libraries to the achievement of the health Millennium Development Goals: The achievement of the health Millennium Development Goals was greatly aided by public libraries, particularly in the purchase of relevant health-related materials. All types of health information are highly sought after by library patrons, particularly in the areas of maternity and child care. The results also show that the majority of public libraries do not provide Internet access to their patrons; as a result, patron satisfaction with the services provided by the library is notably low.

Based on the results of the study, the researcher suggests that Senegal's public libraries should receive more attention from both the government and private citizens. In order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, public libraries ought to be viewed as the central location. Funding for public libraries should be sufficient to purchase sufficient and pertinent books, computers, and guarantee consistent access to the Internet. Employees at libraries

should receive training and be tasked with delivering services that support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals for health. The distinct role that public libraries play in different communities should also be taken into account by policymakers. In this sense, public libraries ought to be compensated fairly.

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